

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 2, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

As you are aware, unemployment is skyrocketing in Florida as the COVID-19 pandemic compels countless businesses to temporarily close their doors or dramatically scale down operations. Many of our recently unemployed constituents are having trouble applying for and receiving the federal unemployment benefits to which they are entitled under the *CARES Act* (P.L. 116-136). Specifically, our constituents have advised us that the state-operated website is not functioning properly or at all, and that it is difficult to speak with a qualified person over the phone in order to obtain assistance.

We appreciate the efforts of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to continue to make systems upgrades and increase processing capacity. We respectfully ask you to continue taking all reasonable steps to swiftly address this problem. Otherwise, workers whose lives have been upended by the COVID-19 crisis will be unable to access the financial support they need and deserve during this difficult period.

We are aware that over 75,000 Floridians applied for unemployment insurance benefits last week, and that tens of thousands more are applying for benefits this week. We recognize this surge of new applicants is straining your informational systems, human resources, and overall operations. However, Congress anticipated this challenge and provided substantial funding to state unemployment compensation offices in the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* (P.L. 116-127), enacted back on March 18, 2020. This law provided \$1 billion in grants to states to help them handle the influx of unemployment claims, with \$500 million distributed immediately and the remaining \$500 million reserved for states that experience a 10 percent increase in claims. The law also made technical assistance available to states to help them implement short-term unemployment programs. Separately, Section 2106 of the *CARES Act* waived certain federal requirements so that states can quickly rehire former employees and make temporary hires during this crisis.

We urge you to take full advantage of the financial and technical support made available by the federal government. Enhancing the state website, improving its telephone service, and quickly hiring new employees—including qualified Floridians who lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19—are all critically important steps. We stand ready to assist you in any way necessary.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



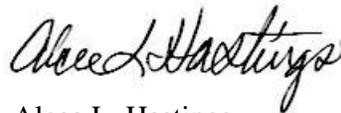
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Al Lawson
Member of Congress



Brian Mast
Member of Congress



Donna Shalala
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress